

With the possible exception of Brahms, Bruckner was less touched by "programmatic" tendencies than any other composer of the later nineteenth century. There is nothing pictorial about his music. The extraordinarily irrelevant programme he provided for his Fourth Symphony (the "Romantic") is proof not of his sympathies with literary associations but evidence rather of his exceptional willingness to *oblige*, a characteristic trait in his personality that often complicated his life and most certainly resulted in a confusion of autographs—of "original", "revised", "edited" and semi-spurious versions of his symphonies—without parallel in the history of music. But more of that below. There can be little doubt that the peculiarly naive pictures Bruckner supplied for his Fourth Symphony were prompted by suggestions from well-meaning friends who thought that the symphony's chances would be improved by the attachment of a programme. Thus Bruckner, with his customary zeal where matters of promotion were on hand, divulged his innocent but ridiculous tale of knights on steeds abroad in a romantic panorama of forest and mediaeval city. If the problem of a truly romantic symphony's content were to be settled as easily as this, there would be little left for the annotator to annotate.

Bruckner's programme for his Fourth Symphony has largely—and rightly—been abandoned. The "Romantic" label, however, has been retained, and since it says something fundamentally true, if elementary, about the work's character, there is a point to its retention. When we come to the Fifth Symphony, we are again faced with the question of a label, though on this occasion the title—"Fantastic"—is not supported by an attempt at a programme. Bruckner himself, one suspects, would have been hard put to supply verbal images that would bear even the most casual of relations to the monumentally abstract nature of this symphony.

It is significant that other commentators have mainly confined themselves to generalities when discussing the symphony's content—a "symphony of faith" is one writer's view, an expression of "the will to live" is another's. "Fantastic", in fact, carries us further, and rightly so, since it was Bruckner who thus dubbed his Fifth Symphony: we would expect the title, in these circumstances, to mean something, and something musical, moreover—not merely descriptive.

It is difficult, of course, to speculate as to what was in Bruckner's mind when he let drop this somewhat surprising adjective. We can only be sure that he was not thinking along the same lines as was Berlioz in his "Fantastic Symphony". We may assume, for a start, that Bruckner's title has everything to do with the character of the musical invention, invention that is divorced from any kind of extra-musical allusions. A clue is divulged to us in the symphony's tremendous finale—certainly one of Bruckner's greatest—to which "fantastic" applies very neatly, not because of the movement's scope or size, but because of the genuinely "fantastic" contrapuntal mastery revealed therein: counterpoint, indeed—the contrapuntal style—is this finale's *fons et origo*, and results in a structure without a strict precedent and without a parallel in nineteenth century music. It is a unique approach to the finale problem. When we remember how, for many years, Bruckner laboured at his composition lessons and in particular at his contrapuntal studies—Simon Sechter, the famous Viennese theorist, was his teacher—it becomes more and more probable that it was the startling and novel achievement explicit in this finale—its sheer technical mastery—that drew from Bruckner the commendation that sometimes figures as the work's title.

We enter territory much more complex when we come to examine the question of textual authenticity. Two principal factors are involved:

Bruckner's chronic uncertainty as a composer—expressed in the continuous revisions to which he subjected his works—and the enthusiasm of certain friends (mainly that of the brothers Schalk, Franz and Joseph, and Ferdinand Löwe) for easing the path of his music (to their ears) by "improvements" that took the shape of extensive re-instrumentation—in brief, "Wagnerizing" the sound of Bruckner's scores—and, on occasions, of extensive cuts of what was considered superfluous or redundant. It would be a simple matter to decide between the claims of "original" and "edited" versions if Bruckner himself had not had a foot in either camp, for it is known that there were certain features of his editors' work of which he approved. Whatever the purists may say, moreover, Bruckner's own "original" intentions often remain obscure—an instance is the notorious cymbal clash in the *Adagio* of the Seventh Symphony, an editorial addition omitted in one version of the original autograph but reinstated in a later publication (a second "original" version!). Probably the best, indeed the only, compromise is to hear from time to time both the original and revised (i.e., edited) versions of Bruckner's symphonies. There is no doubt, all other considerations apart, that the latter have won the affections of conductors and a large public; and at the very least they may be said to form a part of musical history with which every intelligent Bruckner lover and student must become acquainted. Comparisons of the symphonies in their original and edited versions offer us a significant glimpse into the workings of Bruckner's mind and shed much light on the sonorous ideals of his contemporaries—ideals often at variance with his own.

The textual case of the Fifth Symphony is a comparatively clear one. The work was written in 1875-77, when Bruckner was living in Vienna and

lecturing there at the University. Ten years passed before he heard a performance of the work, on April 20, 1887, when the symphony was played in public on two pianos by Joseph Schalk and Franz Zottmann, in Schalk's own arrangement. The first orchestral performance, conducted by Schalk, was given at Graz on April 9, 1894. Bruckner, then, was a sick man. He was unable to attend the première, and it was Schalk who "prepared" the score for the performance. (It is this version, which differs from the original autograph in certain important particulars, that is here recorded. The finale, in Schalk's edition, was shortened, and the instrumentation revised: for example, the scoring of the finale's concluding chorale for a separate brass band was, it seems, Schalk's handiwork.) The symphony was published two years later, in 1896, in Schalk's revision, but Bruckner was seriously ill—he died in the same year—and was unable to supervise the labours of his editor. In these circumstances, it is not unlikely that the liaison between Schalk and Bruckner must have been somewhat vague—hence it is difficult at this stage to establish how far the ailing composer positively committed himself to Schalk's emendations. Once again the solution for us lies in familiarizing ourselves with both the revised and original editions of the work.

The symphony itself, mercifully, presents fewer problems. This is not to say that the work is simple in content or procedure; but what it has to reveal—the truly astonishing revelation of a singular musical genius—it reveals with a maximum of clarity and purposefulness. Bruckner's first four symphonies offer plentiful evidence of his originality, of the profundity of his inspiration, but it was in the Fifth that, for the first time, he succeeded in fulfilling *all* powers as a symphonist and the result was a work of massive proportions, massive fertility and striking formal unorthodoxy: this unpretentious musician, the Fifth Symphony discloses, was capable of the most immense and most imaginative structural feats. As has been suggested above, the finale of the symphony deserves special consideration. It is in this astounding movement that the weight of the work lies. So grand a resolution presupposes—indeed, demands—something weighty to be resolved, and if we trace our steps backwards from the finale we find that it is the first movement which, monumental as it is in itself, is so devised that ample tension remains to be discharged—"worked out"—in the finale. It is the shadow of the first movement that looms over the two intervening points of rest. The beautiful *Adagio* alternates and expands two of Bruckner's wide-spanned melodies, the first characterized by its sequential continuation of falling seventh—of prime importance in the melody's final elaboration—the second by its noble, singing breadth. The large-scale Scherzo is in Bruckner's robust and bucolic vein; its contrasted, deftly orchestrated Trio is almost slyly humorous in manner.

These two movements are contained within the encircling frame of the first movement and finale which constitute, in a very real sense, an integral unit, i.e., the finale may be regarded as a further development of the resources of the first *Allegro*. We hear the relation at its plainest in the finale's coda where the first movement's principal motive (abbreviated) is hammered home by the independent brass band in the midst of, and as a conclusion to the majestic chorale that crowns the symphony. This pregnant leading motive is first heard (in B flat minor, for the tonic major has to be *won*) at the beginning of the first movement's exposition, after the slow introduction. It is extensively and contrapuntally treated in the development section (hints of the finale), and it initiates the movement's telescoped recapitulation—the compression is significant in view of the finale's extension. The very character of the organization of this first movement and the necessity for the reintroduction of its principal motive into the finale are the factors that really pre-determine the complex contrapuntal edifice in and through which Bruckner resolves all the tensions of his Fifth Symphony. Counterpoint, as Bruckner employs it here, as total development of given motives, is a splendid method of tying up a multiplicity of strands, old and new, and the "old" strand from the first movement slips into place with inexorable logic and precision: the "fantastic" web of counterpoint, one might say, was built eventually to accommodate this consummatory gesture of unity, though the slow introduction to the finale, which recalls themes from previous movements, shows how anxious Bruckner was to demonstrate, in advance, his symphony's remarkable thematic integration.

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